FOREWORD

The "Fellaheen" of Egypt are the oldest peasantry in the world. History teaches us this, and also that the Valley of the Nile shows the oldest records of civilised and cultural life. 101

Throughout thousands of years our peasantry has kept its customs, habits, character, and type in a remarkably steady manner. 183

It is still essentially what it was in the far-distant Pharaonic days : one of the two main pillars of Egypt's wealth and well-being. The other, as Herodotus remarked long ago, is the river Nile.

A great deal has been said about the Fellah, particularly during the last few decades, and there is a vast amount of literature about Egypt and its people. Seldom, however, has a writer devoted his main interest to the study of the Egyptian peasant as a human type, looking at him, his character, his culture and traditions, with sympathy, objectivity, and an unbiased view. 114

The present book fills this gap in the literature about our country. We owe its author our sincerest thanks. 000

The more one really studies the Fellaheen of Egypt, the more one will discard a lot of mistaken ideas about their character. Now that the country has come to a turning-point of its history, it is essential that its people as a whole should be fully aware of the tremendous task ahead of them. A complete and intimate collaboration among all classes, a particularly sympathetic understanding — and not just a platonic one — of their peasantry by the upper class and landowners, is the basis and most important element of this patriotic cooperation. The "Fellah", whether as a small — and how small! — landowner or as an agri-

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

and evidencing practically no difference in architecture, style or number of storeys, as there are no two-storey houses in the village. Members of each sex dress more or less alike, and the observing of this convention is a very important factor in social equality. Their maxim in this connection is 'Eat what you yourself like, but dress according to what others like'. Yet all this does not mean that they are entirely identical, and the differences are usually in quantity and not in kind. The headman of the village—'Omda'—may have more clothes than others, but his clothes are the same type of clothes tailored in the same style; he may have a larger house than his neighbour but both are built in the same style with the same kind of furniture, the same sanitary arrangements and cooking facilities. The villagers do not divide themselves into 'the rich' and 'the poor'. Strengthening this sense of equalitarianism are the kinship ties where all the members of the village are inextricably connected with each other by family ties and obligations, this being reinforced by the sense of brotherhood amongst Moslems as enjoined upon them by the Koran.

With respect to the position of children in the village, they are certainly considered as an economic asset from the age of five. They constitute the labour-force in a community where hired labour is very difficult to procure. With not many expenses needed for their upbringing, and with the tangible labour they undertake, the burden of rearing children is offset; for although they are consumers, they are, even more so, contributors to the family resources. Children are also a means of providing parents with leisure and prestige, and every new child provides his or her older sibling with more opportunities for respite and leisure. Their economic contributions are enlisted by a gradual process of training, first through actual help in the farm activities, this being followed by the assignment of specific tasks to them, according to their age and physical abilities.

It must also be emphasized that these conditions and attitudes obtain in a village of small landholders. It is a matter for enquiry to find whether the same conditions prevail in villages where large-size ownership of the 'landed gentry' is the basis of economic life. It must be remembered that distribution of land in Egypt shows a great deal of unevenness. Out of 5,857,258 feddans of cultivable land in 1942, 2,160,219 feddans were owned by 12,103 persons out of the total number of owners amounting to 2,550,579. Of these owners 93 per cent held less than 5 feddans each and were in possession of only 31 per cent of the land. In 1939, owners of plots over 20 feddans constituted but 1·5 per cent of the total number of landowners, and these possessed just over 50 per cent of the total land.[1]

This system of land ownership in Egypt has nothing to do with legal Islamic institutions, apart from the Islamic law of inheritance. Such maldistribution of land is mainly due to the Ottoman regime and the reign of Muhammad Ali. The Land Code of 1858 and Land Registration Law of

[1] See *Pocket Census of Egypt*, 1948. Wendell Cleland, 'A Population Plan for Egypt', in *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, 1939.

BIRTH, INFANCY AND EARLY TRAINING

due to the fact that there is no formal ceremony for the naming in Artas, as in Silwa, and hence the change is easier.

Since the enforcement of registration of births about forty years ago, the child is registered after the ceremony. It is to be remembered that still-births are not registered, and are never buried in the cemetery, but always below the threshold of the house.

The mother takes no active part in all the ceremony activities, as she is not allowed to move from her room of confinement until forty days have elapsed. As mentioned earlier, the child is considered to be guarded throughout this period by the angels, who talk to him, entertain him, and sometimes tease or even annoy him. This is the explanation of the baby's occasional smiles, as well as cries. He smiles because the angels have told him that his father is alive, and cries when they inform him that his father has died.

By the end of the forty days, the mother finishes her period of confinement and is considered to be in full control of the baby. She can move about with him and resume her ordinary domestic tasks as she becomes ceremonially clean after having her first bath, a kind of ritual cleansing.

The end of this confinement means the gradual introduction of the child to the wider family circles by taking it on visits to relatives or them visiting the house with presents. If the mother takes the child to any house, the child is never expected to leave empty-handed. Whether near or distant relatives, or of no blood connection at all, they always give the child presents varying from salt, dates, a loaf of bread, an egg, to money and more valuable things. On the birth of the first child the paternal grandfather cannot see his grandson without sending a ram or a goat before his arrival.

Another step is the introduction of the newly-born boy to the other boys in the neighbourhood. For this purpose the mother prepares a dish of boiled maize or wheat and sugar, called 'balila', and taking her child, accompanied by the children of the neighbourhood, repairs to some elevated land to eat the food. For this occasion the mother dresses in new scented clothes. For the first time also, the child wears new clothes, consisting of a white undergarment covered by a striped one, thus discarding his mother's or father's old wrappings.

It is socially encouraged that both a woman and a man should give rein to their intense desire for children. The main function of marriage is to have children and thus perpetuate family life. This shows itself in one of the condolatory phrases addressed to any offspring on the occasion of their father's death: 'He who has left successors is not dead.' My informant, Ali, said, 'A childless couple will have no "successors" to read the "Fatiha" for their souls after their death and their name will thus end by their departure from this world. Children are really useful, not only in this world but in the world hereafter. The Prophet (on whom be the peace and blessings of God) said, "Get married and multiply, as I shall take

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

neighbourhood wrangling for some time. In this case, boys who have been sneaking are referred to by other boys as 'women', or in the case of girls are branded as 'loose' or 'prostitutes'. Parents' advice to their children is, 'Hit back him who hits you'.

Thus, before adolescence, a boy, not only through overhearing the gossip of his elders, but also through his age group norms, becomes aware of the significance of gossip as a means of social control. He is perhaps the cause of gossip or included in it, and this would expose him to shaming or avoidance by other children. The boy's friends might not speak to him and this would make him stand exposed and isolated.

Thus, it is obvious that though any signs of children's aggression towards adults is tabooed and punishable, their expression of hostility towards their age-mates is given full play. Rivalry and competition are mainly directed both in the adult and in the child world towards equals. Rivalry between generations seldom occurs, as it is mainly horizontal and not vertical.

The cultural axiom is for the adult to give and for the young to receive: to accept aid in kind or money from one's elders is permissible, while the reverse would be humiliating, or at least embarrassing, unless prescribed by kinship obligations, such as aid rendered by the son to his father in old age.

There is a vivid contrast between the lively, free, and rough behaviour of children in their groups and their shy and diffident manners when they are attending grown-ups, while eating or during any celebration in the house. On being punished or rebuked by his elders, the child is expected to obey, while if he shows any submissiveness, if wronged by his 'pals', he would be punished by his parents and would be asked to retaliate for himself. A boy was called Abdu the Batil (the coward) by his pals, a name for which he seemed to have no outward resentment. On asking the boy about how he got this nickname, he told me that his father had applied the name to him and told the other boys with whom he associated to call him so, as his father was annoyed by his constant appeals to his parents to protect him from other children.

After reviewing the general atmosphere of the two educative spheres in the child's life, it is appropriate to discuss the means by which some social norms are impressed on him. As mentioned earlier, one of the cardinal virtues of a disciplined child is his respect for his elders. Till the age of four or five, this respect expresses itself in the young boy, on being introduced to a gathering in the house, touching the older person's hands with his lips and forehead. When the child grows older, this is replaced by a handshake followed immediately by his withdrawal from the adult gathering. The sign of respect by kissing the older person's hand with one's lips and forehead, although it ceases to apply amongst village people themselves, would still be practised by older boys and adults towards strangers visiting the house. Moreover, this is always the sign of respect for

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa.

Chapter Nine

ADOLESCENCE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

ADOLESCENCE as a stage of development in the individual's life assumes but little importance, and is unmarked by a ceremony or any other means of social recognition. By the age of thirteen or fourteen the child's maturing of sex organs is referred to as 'bulough—maturation' (literally the stage when one reaches a peak). Adolescent boys are sometimes referred to as unmarried men (azab), or 'he whose sweat has become odorous', or 'he unto whom life has entered' (khashu al 'aish). For the parents, adolescent boys and girls do not present any specific problems, except for the fact that they are approaching the marriageable age.

In the villagers' view, adolescence and marriage are inextricably connected. It is not unusual for girls to get married by the age of twelve and thirteen, in spite of the law which stipulates that this may not be effected before the age of sixteen. This happens without official registration, and the reading of the 'Fatiha' between the two parties is sufficient to sanction and validate the marriage. Nowadays, boys usually marry after eighteen, on finishing the requirements and examination connected with military conscription, and it is one of the youths' misgivings against conscription that it delays their marriage, or at least provides a pretext for their parents for such a delay.

According to our way of approach, it is appropriate here to discuss the dominant norms that are emphasized in the genetic development of the individual at this stage. Most of these norms are not new but they loom larger in this stage, while other norms are still imperceptibly reinforced.

The first of these social norms is the emphasis on industry and responsibility of the maturing boys and girls. By the age of twelve or thirteen, boys and girls are now, with few exceptions, out of school and Kuttab. They could be entrusted to work either in the fields or at home without parental supervision, thus becoming a decided economic asset. Participating in adult work, with full responsibility, provides the adolescents on their part with a secure position in the family.[1]

[1] For examples of such responsible tasks, see Chapter I.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

ADOLESCENCE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

Summing up the first dominant norm during the adolescent stage, one finds that boys and girls accept responsibility for active work and are characterized by the elimination of play elements compared with childhood and submission to parental authority as an ennobling virtue.

By the age of sixteen or seventeen the adolescent boys toe the line of adults, who reluctantly allow children to play their games or tell stories, provided they are assured of their victory in due course. The age-group of adolescents is interested in real issues and happenings of the village, e.g. disputes, ceremonies, neighbours' gossip, the new camel or bull that so-and-so bought, things that their families sell or buy in the market, the times of sowing and harvesting. Even in their interest in stories, it is the Jiha type of story with its realistic touch, and those of life or miraculous feats of saints rather than the fables that interest them.

The attitudes towards sex represent the second norm that becomes dominant in the individual's life at this stage. It is true that sex segregation of children in play, the boys' abandoning of their earrings (while girls keep them), starts earlier, at the age of nine and ten years, but it is almost fully established by the age of twelve and thirteen.[1]

Sex organs now become pudenda and adolescents become careful about the way they sit or what they wear. The notion of shame (Ar) is primarily a word connoting sex disgrace or sexual infidelity. This is the first association that arises in the villager's mind, and has been extended to comprise 'every forbidden impropriety, from a trifling breach of etiquette to the most serious moral turpitude'.[2] The first real emotional feeling of what it means to bring 'ar' to one's family comes through the excessive shame connected with sex organs. Adolescent boys urinate out of sight, while the girls make use of a private room inside the house. Boys wear long pants, whereas girls wear a headcloth to cover part of their face and their breasts on passing by men.[3] For both, any conversation about sex is taboo, and they are forbidden to talk about it to their parents or to any grown-up. Chastity as a moral and religious ideal implies the avoidance of any stimulating pleasurable influence from the opposite sex, or talking about sex. Adolescent girls are not encouraged to look attractive for fear of tempting

Japanese rely on maximizing the restraints upon him. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, p. 254. This generalization applies, on the whole, to the methods of socialization in Silwa.

[1] I noticed that some boys and girls in their free drawings used to draw a line between men and women in a wedding ceremony or a pilgrims' procession. In the Rorschach testing the contrast between the two sexes was expressed in phrases such as 'These are women wearing black and these are men wearing white' although there was nothing in the blot to match statements like this.

[2] W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures and Essays*, London, 1912, p. 136. This word 'ar is different from 'L'ar' or 'al'ard' as pronounced in Silwa which means 'protection' and is said to invoke the help of another person. See E. Westermarck, 'L'ar or the Transference of Conditional Curses in Morocco', in *Anthropological Essays presented to E. B. Tylor*, Oxford, 1907.

[3] I was told that neither women nor adolescent girls wear any special clothes for menstruation.

[For examples, see Category 185 116, pp. 179-183 -- Analyst]

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

PREFACE

THIS book represents but a small portion of the work upon which I have been engaged in Egypt during the last six years. I have spent, on an average, six months annually in the country, living almost entirely among the *fellāḥīn*. I wish to make it quite clear to my readers that the customs and beliefs, and the general manner of life, described in this book represent those of the peasants only; by the upper classes they have, of course, long been discarded. These customs and beliefs are of great importance and interest in themselves, but the fact that most of them are very ancient makes it still more urgent that they should be adequately studied and recorded. Already my researches have thrown light on points hitherto obscure to students of ancient Egypt; hence this book may, I hope, be not only an addition to anthropological knowledge, but also a contribution to Egyptology.

It has been my aim to describe the life of the modern inhabitants of the Nile Valley in the simplest way, avoiding technical language, for my purpose in writing this book has been to interest the general public and present them with a readable and, at the same time, true description of the peasants of Egypt.

I want to emphasize the fact that though the contents of this book form but a tithe of the information I have collected, yet even so I am only at the beginning of my work. Many years of research still lie ahead of me, for the sources of information are very far from exhausted. When my work is more nearly complete my intention is to produce a large and strictly scientific volume on the beliefs and practices and the social and industrial life of the modern Egyptians.

I have endeavoured to be strictly accurate in all my statements. Every custom and belief here dealt with has been most carefully inquired into before I committed it to paper. Nevertheless, those who are experienced field-workers in anthropology know how easy it is to make mistakes and to misunderstand, even after careful investigation, the true inwardness of things. I therefore invite

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THE FELLĀḤĪN OF UPPER EGYPT

CHAPTER I

EGYPTIAN VILLAGES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

THE natural barriers of Egypt (Fig. 1) have enabled the inhabitants, particularly those of the upper country, to live in comparative isolation throughout the whole of their history. On the north side lies the sea, along the east and west sides stretch vast, almost waterless deserts, while to the south ingress by way of the Nile is impeded by a series of cataracts. Their geographical isolation has doubtless been responsible for the characteristic conservatism of the Egyptian peasants. This conservatism is particularly apparent in their religious and social customs and their commoner industries, which, as will be more especially seen in the final chapter, have remained almost, if not entirely, unchanged from Pharaonic times.

The vast solitudes of the deserts are terrifying to the country folk, most of whom, up to the present day, cannot be induced to traverse even the lower fringes of those wastes after sunset (see Fig. 2). Fear of hyenas, and, still more, fear of *'afārīt*,[1] forbids any man to venture beyond the cultivation at night. The ordinary peasant, unless he is obliged to remain in the fields either to protect his crops or to watch over his sheep and goats, returns to his village before sunset, remaining there until just before the dawn of the following day.

The deserts have proved themselves valuable defences against invasion, the peoples who conquered the country at different periods of its history having usually entered it from the north-east. These invaders do not seem to have left any very marked impression on the physical aspect of the Upper Egyptians at any rate; most of these still bear a striking facial resemblance to the ancient inhabitants of the land whom we see depicted on the walls of the temples and tomb-chapels and in the portrait-statues of the Old,

[1] See Chapter XIV.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

far as I know, from private individuals. It is very different in England, where the hospitals for children and adults alike are supported by voluntary contributions. It is not that charity is lacking in Egypt—far from it; but for *organised* charity such as we have in England there is a crying need.

It is not altogether surprising, considering the state of ignorance in which they exist, that the mental outlook of most of the villagers is low. As far as the women are concerned, there is nothing to raise it. Sexual matters form the chief topic of their conversation, and this has a most degrading effect both on them and on their children, before whom they discuss the most private matters without the slightest reserve. Thus the children from their very early years hear subjects spoken of and joked about in a manner that is most revolting to educated people. What chance have the children in such circumstances of growing up into pure-minded men and women? I am told (for such conversation rarely takes place in my presence) that the women are far greater offenders in this respect than the men, who usually refrain from discussing their wives with outsiders. Whether this is true or not I am not in a position to say, but at any rate the children, and especially the girls, who are more constantly with their mothers than the boys, hear the most private sexual matters openly discussed, and in such a way as to poison their minds at the very outset of their lives. Marriage is, of course, the one and only aim in life among the girls, and the desire to get a husband is encouraged in every way by the mothers. It is quite a pitiful sight to see a little girl decked out in all the jewellery she can muster, dressed in a gaily coloured frock decorated with beads and jangles (Fig. 17), and with a veil drawn coquettishly across her face, standing about the village street, or outside the house, obviously on the look-out to attract some man. In all this they are aided and abetted by their mothers, who regard it as a compliment to themselves as well as to their daughters if the latter are sought after as wives at an early age. The Egyptian Government is endeavouring to prohibit the very early marriages which have been usual in the past, and there is now a law forbidding a girl to marry till she is sixteen and a boy till he is eighteen. However, in small, out-of-the-way villages the law has been disobeyed to my certain knowledge in more than one case. False ages were, I suppose, given to the *ḳāḍi*, as the man who draws up the marriage contracts is called; and he, in view of the fee he

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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CHAPTER III

PERSONAL DECORATION AND ORNAMENTS

LOVE of personal adornment seems to be instinctive in the human race, and it has probably existed in some form or another as an element in human character from the earliest times. The beautifying of the person may be achieved in a variety of ways, sometimes involving mutilation of the body. A study of the true inwardness of ornaments and personal decoration in general is most instructive, and may serve a useful purpose on occasions, as I hope to show later.

The simple jewellery of the modern Egyptian peasants, and their body-markings, such as tattooing, supply material for an interesting chapter in the study of these people.

The *fellâḥeh* (peasant woman) is by no means more backward than the average Englishwoman in her endeavours to make the most of whatever personal attractions she may possess, and, as I have stated, her demands for gold and silver ornaments may involve her unfortunate husband in considerable financial embarrassment.

The young girl, usually a mere child, who is on the look-out for a husband often wears a necklace of particular shape, made of gold coins. It is quite an attractive ornament, and also serves as an outward and visible sign of her wealth. A man when about to marry may present his bride with such a necklace, investing some of his money in it, for the women's jewellery is often regarded as a safe form of investment, which can easily be turned into ready cash should the necessity arise. Every girl has her ears and nose bored at a fairly early age, when she becomes the proud possessor of a pair of earrings (Fig. 18, bottom), as well as of a nose-ring (Fig. 18, in centre of necklace). These may be of gold or silver, or, in the case of the poorer people, even of brass. Anklets may be of silver-gilt, silver, or some white metal. Bracelets are usually much in request, and are made of glass of various colours (Fig. 18, extreme left and right), of small beads woven together to form a

[Text continues on p. 49]

178 But we must at all costs avoid here even the appearance
121 of determinism. The fellah is no more the product of the Egyptian countryside than the countryside is the product of the fellah. There is no question here of inevitability, or any determining influence. Man is free, and this freedom is to be defined as "the power of self-determination".

Man is free, and cultivation remains contingent on his will. There are infinite possibilities, among which the will of man — not of the fellah, but of his master — chooses this or that, according to circumstances. At one time, the vine was grown on Egyptian soil. Grapes make wine, and the
241 veto of the Koran killed the vineyards. Not long ago, vast
249 areas were planted with tobacco, but the Government has now forbidden this. Maize of American origin, and cotton, introduced in the nineteenth century, are now chief among the crops. Tomorrow some new crop may cover the fields. No law of necessity, whether of climate or soil, determines once and for all the agriculture of Egypt; much less, then, human life. At the same time the climate and vegetation of Egypt exert a characteristic influence on those who live in, and on, the country.

181 In the case of the town-dwellers and industrial workers,
193 the bond between nature and man is looser; the impress
132 of the physical environment is softened and neutralised by the
133 stronger social, civic and political influences. This makes
121 these classes less stable, but more progressive.

The countryman, on the other hand, is moulded directly by the soil. Febvre justly criticises the generalisations of Ratzel and Brunhes on the influence of physical environment (4); but without granting their theories anything like universal applicability we may recognise that they do apply sufficiently to agricultural communities, and especially to the Egyptian fellaheen.

It will become clear, indeed, that the monotony, uniformity and productiveness of the Nile Valley have their exact counterpart in the characteristics of the fellah community. These two are not parallel but correlative. They meet and crystallise in a distinct manner of life, which is at once a geographical and a social phenomenon. It will also become clear that the water and mud of the Nile enter into and in great part explain the whole life of the fellah, his work and his home, his body and his soul, and impart

to him both their qualities and their defects. It is because the fellah 'buries' himself in this mud that it has become so fertile. Egypt, gift of the Nile, is no less a gift of the fellah. It is because this soil has incarnated itself in the fellah that he himself is so enduring, but also so material, so stagnant.

Progress then must come from some form of release, of emergence, from education in the original sense of drawing out potentialities. The true duty of society is to liberate the fellah's spirit from its stifling envelope of mud; to free him from the defects of the soil, while leaving him its good qualities. The initiative can never come from his own community, which is completely numbed and powerless, but only from the classes which overshadow him, from the *élite*, who with their riches of mind and money can vitalise him. In this dough must work the leaven of intelligence and sympathy.

The following chapters will illustrate in detail these general remarks, and bring us by the logic of facts to the human conclusion which we have here outlined.

Chapter IV

THE FELLAH AT WORK

The preceding chapters have given a general picture of the physical and social environment of the Egyptian peasantry. Thus the problem has been stated and approached. We can now attack it directly, by considering the fellah himself, first of all at the work from which he derives his name. 121

The Arabic word *fellàh*, which has passed into most modern languages, is the intensive adjective of the verb *fàlaha*, which means to till the ground, labour or toil. 101

As the reader will have already observed, the fellah is looked upon primarily, if not exclusively, as a 'hand' or agricultural machine. As "economic man", he is equated with labour. 186 369

The work of the fellah, even more than his physical and mental make-up or his habitat, is determined by the double environment we have been considering. It seems in fact the mere consequence of the opportunities and limitations created by the soil and by society. His work will thus lead us to the consideration of the fellah as a human being, for it is he who in return carries on the work of the soil and adapts it to human needs. We have here a clear case of reciprocal festivals, interaction. 121 183

1. Methods of Work

The dark soil is not only productive, but also exacting from one year's end to another. The fellah, who is not obliged by the Koran to take a weekly day of rest, works the whole year round, and takes a holiday only at the great festivals, that is to say about ten days in a twelvemonth. 134 461

The sun shines for at least eleven hours a day, and in May, June and July nearer fifteen. The fellah spends by far the greater part of his time in the fields, and for some kinds of work stays there all night. 132 461

241 312 It has been calculated that by this method little more than 200 cubic feet of water, or enough for about one acre, can be raised in a day of twelve hours. Such a yield bears no reasonable proportion to the effort exerted, but the instrument is extremely cheap. As long as poverty remains, such methods will continue in use.

This method is called *nattâla*. It was already known to the fellaheen of Ancient Egypt [22] and is used by Japanese peasants, for example on Shikoku.

Second Method

One or two men crouch at the water's edge, turning and turning the crank handle of a wooden cylinder, which reaches from water level to the mouth of the runnel. The water rises spirally inside this cylinder, which is about 18 ins. across. This is the *tambour* or Archimedean screw, a wooden cylinder hooped with iron and about six or nine feet in length, according as it is turned by one or two men. The spiral is fixed between the inside wall and an iron axis, one end of which is bent into a crank, while the other turns on a stake fixed under water.

The *tambour* can irrigate two or three times as much as a *nattâla*, but it costs more and is heavier to work. Moreover, since it requires the continual use of the forearm, it is very much more tiring. Nevertheless it is still much in use, and may frequently be seen.

These two kinds of water-lifting machinery are practicable when the water level is not very low, but sometimes water has to be sought three, six or even thirty feet below the level of the field to be irrigated.

The easiest thing would be to instal a pumping engine. There are many of these on the large estates, but none on small properties; for as the fellaheen are numerous and conservative, poor in money and rich in time, this "convenience" does not commend itself to them. They solved the watering problem ages ago in a way which matches their means, and they feel no need to desert their present system for one which may possibly be better, but which is as yet new and untried. 181 183

To raise water from a depth of more than three feet the fellah uses a method as primitive as it is simple. He plants

427 511 Then he added, "Since everything we had has been taken from us, we will steal." (**)

The Fellah as Landowner

423 554 183 We have seen that more than two million fellaheen possess a patch of land each. Four fifths of this number own a plot so small — from two kirats to one feddan — as not to suffice a family for either employment or support. Nevertheless among the rural proletariat these small landowners are the 'privileged class'. It is every fellah's ideal to get land, as it is to marry, have children, and own a *gamoosa*.

183 651 452 The owner of a small field has the same things to buy as a tenant: seed, manure, animals and implements (these last usually in partnership with others). He has no rent to pay, but is liable for taxes, and usually interest on debts. The fellah is a poor hand at finance, and rarely has any savings; he borrows money to buy seed or fertilisers, to rent a neighbouring field which will round off his patch, or even, instead of paying off his debts, to buy it.

452 427 Since the banks do not lend small sums, he borrows from private persons, who, in spite of the 1912 Law limiting the maximum interest to 10%, lend him at 30% or even 50%. The interest, if not the debt itself, has to be paid. However hard he works, himself and all his family, in an effort to make his field produce its utmost with the least possible expenditure, he is almost always caught on the wrong leg when the payment falls due. Then he has to hand over all the fruits of his labour, or else sell part of his land.

There is a law (of December 3, 1912) which forbids seizure of the 'homestead', that is to say, five feddans or less. This law, by denying the banks any guarantee for their loans, has prevented smallholders from benefiting by the legal means of credit, and thrown them into the hands of moneylenders.

The fellah must have credit. As often as not, by his own fault, he does not know how to make his loans pay; the harsh terms engulf him deeper and deeper in debt, and the more he borrows the worse he fares. Land debts are like a cancer devouring the small landowner (**).

423 432 However, the fellah who owns land is, in name at least, owner of its products, especially of the cotton, which the

and toilet use there is a large flat tub (*tisht*) which serves as both laundry-basin and bath, a fragment of mirror, and a big wooden chest which may hold almost anything. This was a gift at the betrothal, and its crude colours are reminders of a red-letter day. "In this chest near the oven, whose key the mistress of the house wears at her neck, I have seen all jumbled together eggs, pepper, cheese, rags, needles and thread, several necklaces and a packet of *kohl*." This from the letter of a surprised French missionary.

The close proximity of men, cattle and soil is as noticeable in the fellah's house as in the field and the village. It is a reflection of the fellah's social level and manner of life. Like house, like household.

The fellah's dependence on soil, sun and water extends even to his house. He himself is of the earth, earthy, through his labour and his food, in his diseases and finally in his death. His house no less, by the material of which it is made — floor, walls, roof and all — and by its very squatness is a part of the earth.

The fellah lives out of doors because of the lack of comfort in his home, which is no more than an unfurnished sleeping-place and a store-room, a part of the crowded camp which is the village.

All the houses are alike. The fellaheen have little individuality; each is an atomised unit of the mass, and his household but one cell in the agricultural hive. At the same time there is little or no space reserved for agricultural uses. The fellah works for others, and does not store the produce of the land for himself.

Yet this dwelling, which lacks so much that we deem essential, is so well adapted to its tenants and their habits that they will change or rather deform into its likeness any better-appointed house built for them on a model *'ezba*.

A house on an *'ezba* belongs to the owner, one in the village to the fellah. House and site together are worth at the most L.E. 25. There is no rent or house tax to pay. On an *'ezba* the dwelling enters into the conditions of lease or share-tenancy. In the village it belongs to the head of the family.

In this homestead scarcely larger than himself the fellah leads a life of his own, no longer as a serf but as a master. Each house contains a large family, including very often, besides the father and mother, four or five children, a grand-

donkey to the fields and the *gamoosa* to the canal, where he climbs on its back and sets it turning the *saqia*. The child learns how to cry out, how to chase off thieving birds with stones, how to pick and even plant cotton. He does not lack amusement, for he has plenty of companions. During the day, when the men are toiling in the fields and the women are busy in the house or by the canal, the whole village belongs to the children. It is they whom a visitor sees first. They paddle stark naked in the pond, and learn to swim. They have bulging bellies, for they eat anything and everything. They play in the dust, spinning an onion as a top, hopping on one leg and holding the other heel with their hands, or shooting with a catapult (*nibla*) at date-palms or birds. When they are a little older they play at *siga*, a kind of marble game with small pebbles which have to be moved into forty-nine holes made in the sand.

At about the age of seven the young fellah is circumcised, and thus introduced into the world of men. At this stage he has to go to the elementary school (*ilzamiya*), at least in the mornings. His parents are bound to send him, under pain of a fine of twenty piastres, or fifty for a second offence. 95% of the fellaheen are illiterate, and the Government wishes to wipe out this disgrace from the next generation. The 1923 Constitution decreed that education should be compulsory, but it is only since 1935 that this order has begun to take effect. Schools are being established all over the countryside. Gradually sites are being found in the villages, schools set up, and teachers appointed. Every year, places that within living memory had never seen a teacher are provided with a complete teaching staff. In 1946 there should be 4,600 free elementary schools, and the whole child population will be receiving instruction (41).

The parents do not understand these new ideas. Though accustomed to other tyrannical institutions, they do not resign themselves to this. Some Upper Egyptians of 'Ezbet Balkan, who had been fined for not sending their children to the compulsory Government school, attacked the teachers and wounded them. The peasants care little for education. They only want their children to help them to increase their earnings. Moreover, most villages are still served, according to the ancient system, by a *kuttab*, in which a blind teacher, seated on the ground, gathers a few children round him and teaches them the Koran.

857 [524] 852 872 656 [212] 177 871 163 579 871 794

branches in use to adorn the bride's canopy and the tombs of the dead. 245

The day after his wedding the bridegroom strips a palm branch, splits it at the point and goes to touch his friends with it for good luck. To strike a man with a green palm branch brings blessing. Palms to the fellah are like flowers, and there can be no procession or wedding or funeral without them. [585 777]

The pollen of a male date-palm mixed with water is a charm against childlessness. On the other hand, to swallow one, two, or three date-stones will prevent childbearing for as many years. 777 842

Magic and medicine are confused in the traditional use of the products of the earth to preserve or recover health. The startling pharmacopœia of the fellaheen is to be put down partly to experience but chiefly to superstition. They have taken whatever came to hand and used it : for the bowels an infusion of palm or maize leaves ; for the eyes onion juice or charred cotton ; for broken bones acacia gum ; for swellings or rheumatism bandages of hemp. The treatment clearly depends on what plants they have within reach, and the effect, in great part, on credulity. 755 757 278

Those peasant traditions, unquestioned and irresistible, are largely superstitious. Miss Blackman gives the greater part of her book (**) to describing superstition in its thousand forms, as if the whole life of the fellaheen were passed in these sub-rational affairs. Too much weight, probably is laid on fellah superstitions. They arereo rded with a certain condescension, and in spite of all that has been published on the subject there are still many gaps. However, there is no point in enriching the collection, since there is nothing original in it. Most of these customs are common to the whole of the East or to Islam. The rest, which go back beyond Christianity to ancient Egypt, are one more illustration of the changelessness which was the subject of our first chapter. 183 171 178

It is certain that these benumbing practices of the fellaheen are even more effective than their manner of life in isolating them and bringing about that withdrawal which 'man creates for himself by the whole structure which he founds on his own labour'. To a way of living which itself weighs him to the ground the fellah adds the burden of these ritual observances.

771 Out of reverence for the past, which for the ignorant
182 fellah is shrouded in mystery, a system of rites has been
183 evolved, which he considers inviolable. This, while maintaining and comforting the individual, at the same time stifles his liberty and initiative and dulls his spirit until he is no longer able to distinguish between the essential and the superfluous.

But this structure, however vast it may be, does not constitute the whole of the fellah's psychology. It is one of the pressures he has to bear. Like the pressure of the soil and of living men, it warps him considerably, but it is no more able than they are to destroy his soul.

Chapter IX

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE FELLAH

The peasant masses live on their own resources, without any contribution to speak of from outside. This is their strength and their weakness. A peasant is born, whereas a worker is made. The constant influence of the fellah's environment cannot fail to mould not only his body, but his soul as well. 181 183

We now know what the fertile Valley of the Nile, on the one hand, and the pressure of the social pyramid, on the other, consists in. The demands of both enslave the fellah; his life is all dependence—dependence on the soil, on material things, on the living and on the dead. The fellah must always obey, like a child under age; such is the framework within which the outlines of his temperament are drawn. However difficult and however liable to misleading generalisations any study of collective psychology may be, we can nevertheless trace with sufficient accuracy the essential features of the mind and character of the fellaheen. The common factors of country, race, religion, social status, and manner of life, all of which we have considered in the foregoing chapters, entitle us to write in the singular of the fellah's soul.

It would be easy but unjust to judge him on a single point, as his masters do. "The fellah is lazy", they say. "All bodily labour is an effort to him. So he would rather live without bettering his condition than tire himself".

"The fellah is hardly ever grateful. However good his masters may be to him, he never shows them the least sympathy. He swears devotion to them when they are there and is active and hardworking; but as soon as their backs are turned he becomes slack again and loses all initiative. "The fellaheen are a cowardly, cringing lot". "They are stupid, evil people. They take every opportunity of cheating you."

181 Other landowners or *nazers* take a better view. They
183 say : "Under their noisy exterior, our fellaheen are quiet, gentle people. They are satisfied with their lot, but rarely grateful. They have no interests apart from the soil." "The fellah is always happy and grateful. He is a hard and trusty worker."

114 Some of these opinions, which are taken at random from
181 both Upper and Lower Egypt, seem flatly contradictory. They
183 are not enough to make up a portrait, in spite of the good intentions of those who gave them ; they all arise from a misunderstanding of the fellah and are in both senses of the word *partial* truths. The living reality is more complex. It would be an error of simplification to say 'Man is born good and it is society that makes him bad', or to look at only one side, the good or the evil, according to one's sympathy or lack of sympathy with the subject, or to one's own characteristic personal philosophy and outlook. To create a true picture, all these aspects must be taken into account. As in the old stereoscope, the image cannot appear in depth until both views are seen together, when there is a real combination of elements.

181 One important point must have become clear from what
183 has already been said : that the fellah's intelligence is rather collective than personal, and more static than dynamic. His wisdom and experience have crystallised into pithy sayings and proverbs, which are ready coin for all the different circumstances of his life and absolve him from individual thinking.

The fellah preserves and repeats, but does not originate anything. Any improvements or inventions introduced into agriculture or housing have been imposed on him from outside. Through constant acceptance and submission his intelligence has become atrophied and passive. It is always kept in leading-strings and never stimulated to innovation. That would mean running risks and disturbing a torpor which protects him from unnecessary suffering. What a man knows is better than what he does not know.

This lack of personality and initiative furnishes in its turn an explanation for the want of sensibility or of any living art among the fellaheen. They are uncultivated in this direction less because they are illiterate than because they neither think nor strive. In their fellah costume, in

their villages and in their fields they provide subjects for the art of others, but remain unconscious of their own beauty. Yet their love of the soil, their sense of rhythm, and their taste for songs, stories and colours should make their artistic education easy. [181] [183]

They are more apt at figures, at repetition and at copying. The author has met fellaheen who can do very complicated arithmetical problems in their heads, and can put an accountant right where he has made a mistake, whether by accident or design. Others reproduce models they are given with the utmost faithfulness, and retain for a very long time the memory of a remark or a visit, or of an object they have been shown. But although their memory is excellent their understanding is slow. [803]

Yet in childhood they are quick to understand, as may be seen when they are in school or at play ; but at about fifteen they begin to get dull. Up to this age the fellaheen are lively, and seem quicker than the people of the West.

Their early physical development and the effect of the climate might explain this. But what can explain the apathy that overcomes them afterwards, and keeps them, in spite of everything, a backward race ? [181] [182]

Undernourishment has been suggested as a cause. But if this were responsible their physical development would also suffer. The adult fellah has a strong constitution. Some sociologists put it down to masturbation, which is fairly common in the Islamic East ; but this vice seems limited to the cities, for country people are much less morbid. It has also been attributed to the unavoidable effect of climate, as a plant which grows too quickly stops growing at a certain point, and withers. But there are fellaheen who have left their villages and produced in the second generation good doctors, capable engineers, or at least officials and businessmen equal to those of other countries. [142] [839]

It can only be his social environment which limits the intelligence of the young fellah, that is to say the crass ignorance which surrounds him from his first entry into the community, and the routine of a life which bows him down to the soil and condemns him to everlasting repetition. This is what arrests the development of his mind. Intelligence is developed by new gain and achievements, which are unknown in this too stable world of the Egyptian peasantry.

183 The women are more intelligent than the men. Sir
184 William Willcocks, whose great achievements in irrigation by no means prevented him from studying the fellaheen, explains the difference thus: — "A bad government, if passively accepted by men, who are naturally active, will sooner or later demoralise them. The same government, if passively submitted to by women, who are naturally passive, tends on the contrary to develop their intelligence. That is why the fellah women are not only more intelligent, but more trustworthy than the men (*)".

This opinion is open to discussion. The fact it seeks to explain — the traditional feminism of Egypt — is quite clear.

181 The fellah's wife is also more cunning than her husband,
183 which is saying a good deal. Like all weak people the fellah
562 practises cunning to the point of duplicity. He knows how to conceal his joy, his suffering or his crime. His inexpressive features are a great help. In his shifts and dodges — when he leaves it to time to decide, when he agrees without any intention of keeping his word, when he uses evasive language or purposely misunderstands — he shows an adaptability which is indeed a kind of intelligence, but intelligence at the level of instinct.

181 The fellah seems lacking in logic. In reality his ideas run parallel, and he judges by his own standards. Ask a
523 fellah how far it is to a certain village, and he will reply "A piastre bus-ride".

181 The *'omda* understands this mentality perfectly. "Go
565 to your father, my lad, and tell him that the Bey (his creditor) is waiting here for him. If your father isn't there, tell him to come all the same, for the Bey knows that he is there." And the father, his bluff called in advance, comes along without any trouble at all.

181 The truth is that the fellah does not think outside the immediate present; he is fettered to the actual moment. No time and place except the present have much effect on his mind, because they have none on his senses. He is like a primitive man or a child; his intellect is controlled by his senses, and remains close to things felt and done. The fellah looks for causes and effects in the field not of reason, sight. Life to him is a succession but of todays. That is why he seems illogical.

This mental defect, which is maintained by lack of education, is the cause of his improvidence. The whole year through he will deny himself even necessities; then the Feast comes, and he spends everything. His whole family enjoys two or three days of excitement — new clothes, rich food, sight-seeing. Then he goes back to his old life poorer than ever. 181 527

Suppose he has a few pounds in hand, which he has earned or borrowed, and his field needs attention. Does he buy tools or good manure to increase its yield? No, he will run further into debt to purchase the adjoining lot, to own a little more, to seem less of a smallholder. And when the time comes to repay? Sufficient unto the day... 181 185 423

The housewife never trims her lamp until it is already dark. The ploughman never greases his plough until he begins work. He pays his debts when he is forced to, buys seed on the eve of sowing, sends for the doctor when there is no more hope. He is improvidence incarnate. 183

Maqrîzi, writing in the fourteenth century, notes this shortsightedness. "One side of the Egyptian character is never to take thought for the future. The Egyptians never store up provisions like the inhabitants of other lands. Another of their characteristics is the absence of reflection. My friend Sheikh Ibn Khaldoun used to say: 'The Egyptians act as if no day of reckoning would ever come'." 181 185

It is a fact that they neither think nor act except as the occasion demands, according to the pressure felt at the actual moment. Their reaction is determined by immediate sensation. This is why they are at the same time trustful and mistrustful, individualistic and gregarious, miserly and thriftless, patient and fiery-tempered. 181

They show a trust amounting to credulity in sacred things or persons able, as they think, to fulfil their desire for children, revenge or health. Their innumerable superstitions, the prestige enjoyed by ministers of the cult, and the success of pious-seeming impostors are all signs of this unbelievable credulity. 181 771

At the same time they habitually mistrust one another, even within the same family. Their master they mistrust even when he does well by them. They are like children too often deceived and stinted, who suspect everybody else of being jealous of the little they have. This is the root of their belief in the Evil Eye. 181 571 578 754

This fear and mistrust, justified by long ages of extortion and betrayal, make the fellah selfish and unable to see anything except as it touches himself. When he saves, it is in the greatest secrecy. If he has done good business, he will take great care not to speak about it ; so closely does misfortune dog prosperity. When matters of profit, land or women — the usual causes of division — are no longer in question, then the social instinct becomes paramount. We have seen how gregarious the fellaheen are in their work, their rejoicings and their sorrows. This sociability, when there is imminent danger to face, turns into solidarity. More usually it results in good humour and childlike display.

The more the fellah has saved up in thes ecret hiding-place in his home, the more likely he is to be carried away by the crowd at a holiday feast and squander it, for show as much as for enjoyment, like a child who cannot resist the temptation of a shop-window.

He is light-hearted, because neither past nor future worries him. He enjoys to the full the present moment : *Carpe diem.* When interrupted by an order, he replies "Tomorrow" (*bukra*), driving what he has to do out of the range of his consciousness, holding as long as he can to the present. Even when he has to obey at once he replies "*Hadir*" (presently) or "*Tayyib*" (very well) without any intention of hurrying himself. Everything in its own time. As he hopes for no improvement, why should he exert himself ? His torpor is his refuge, his *kaif*, that is to say his 'how', the way things suit him.

Kaif is a word of profound significance, expressing a kind of wakeful passivity which means doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing. It is a form of perfect patience, taught him by the soil. To keep his mind half awake, to wait without apparent activity, or to drown activity in a private fantasy, in a humming which lulls his work and all his movement, in a mental languor which softens the shocks of human contact, that is *kaif*, the fundamental attitude of the fellah, a semi-consciousness which abates suffering.

He will come several hours early to catch a train, but may equally well arrive several hours late for an appointment. Punctuality, precision and haste are beyond his ken. Why should he set limits to the present or hustle it away ?

Because the fellah lives entirely in the present, he is neither hurried, nor curious, nor ambitious. He is mild and peaceable because he is patient, and patient because he is subject to men and events, and for these very reasons he is, like the Nile, indifferent rather than idle. He feels no need for constant activity. His mind is passive and fatalistic; he takes things as they come. 181 183

At times, however, some fact breaks suddenly through the confused atmosphere of his mind, through this mist that protects him from excess of knowledge or action — as from suicide — and goads him into activity. Then he reacts on the impulse of the moment, without discrimination or sense of proportion, without reckoning the importance of what has happened or thinking of the consequences of what he is doing. His neighbour pinches some of his harvest, a duck, or a fowl. Someone diverts his irrigation water or lets a *gamoossa* loose on his grazing. His son is bullied by another boy or his wife insulted by some other woman. A friend delays too long in returning a few borrowed piastres, or looks too long at his wife. Someone brings a complaint or accusation against him. Then the same fellah who is so patient under the injustice or cruelty of his superiors shows himself to his equals as touchy as can be. The occurrence may be of little or no importance, but it seems to him intolerable and stings him to revenge. He reacts violently, and infects others with the same passion as himself. Human life counts for nothing. 181 152 577 578 [685] [683 426]

In Upper Egypt, when a man quarrels with another he will try to attack him on the spot with any weapon he can lay his hands on. The fellah of the Sa'id is like a volcano which will erupt when least expected. 579 181 578

More usually the revenge is cunningly dissembled, and carried out by night with endless precautions. The enemy will be set upon from behind, in the maize fields; or if the man himself is not attacked his crop will be burnt, his *gamoossa* poisoned, or his corn scattered over the neighbouring fields.

Though the fellah will put up with a multitude of wrongs from his masters when at work, he is not afraid to stand up to them if the dispute is about women, for women and land are the points on which he is most susceptible. Then there 181 183 578 562

181 is no question of strong and weak, rich and poor. Authority
183 and wealth count for nothing. Landowners know this,
578 and cannot take their pleasure of the village women.
562 More than one Bey has been murdered at his own door for seducing a village girl.

682 Murder and revenge among the fellaheen arise more
181 often from quick temper than from ill will ; they are signs
152 of hot blood. But such outbursts do not last long, and resignation, being more habitual, is a far more noticeable characteristic.

[539] The following fellah proverbs are significant :
Patience moves mountains.
Patience costs nothing.
The patient man sees free.

773 'When God created all things', says Ka'b el Ahbar, according to Maqrîzi, 'He gave each of them a companion. "I am going to Syria", said Reason. "I will come with you", said Rebellion. Poverty said "I am going to the Desert". "I'll come with you", said Health. "I am going to Egypt", said Plenty. "And I'll go at your side", said Resignation.'

181 Resignation is a word scarcely strong enough to describe
183 the servility and degradation which is imposed upon the fellaheen not so much by their poverty as by the unceasing pressure of their masters. The fellah acts like a child or a brute because he is treated like one. He knows nothing of the upper class which rules him except its hard exterior. It is often said that the fellaheen cannot understand an authority that is humane and appeals to their better instincts. This is true, but the reason is that they have been brought
[681] up to nothing but blows, fines, insults, and bullying, which have finally rendered them insensible.

I myself, before I understood the meaning of human dignity, used the same harshness towards them, so natural and inevitable did it seem.

That the fellah's sense of justice is corrupt, that he lacks frankness, confidence, and eagerness is true, but this is because no-one has done anything to teach him these qualities or to give him any moral encouragement.

It is also true that his work is done without pleasure, without devotion and without style, that he has no taste for doing a job well, that he lacks initiative and inventive-

ness ; but these defects are due to his servitude and isolation. In the words of El-Kolâly, his mind is walled-in between ignorance and tyranny. (")

Moreover the soil and the care of the soil make the fellah patient, long-suffering and hard. The soil has imprinted on him something of its own earthiness. His very love is entirely physical, and yet he is not immoral.

He is taught from childhood that he comes from his mother's womb. His bad language when he is angry shows how much he knows of sexual matters. Even girls playing with dolls enact scenes of perfect realism. But this calm animal shamelessness has nothing in common with obscenity. Fundamental morality is not affected by it. The fact that everybody is watching everybody else, together with the conservative temperament and instinctive modesty of the fellaheen, makes offences against morals fewer than elsewhere. As El-Kolâly says, 'Among the fellaheen offences against morality represent only a small proportion of the total'.

Poverty and tradition inure the fellah from his early days to the lack of all bodily ease. A comfortable bed, a pleasant home life, a good table, light company — these are things beyond his grasp. Their absence safeguards his morality. So do the precepts of Islam, it might be added ; but the fellaheen are very ignorant of their religion, and the Sheikhs and Ulema do little to teach them. It is more probable that among these primitive people natural morality keeps its original force.

The fellaheen are moral because they believe in God. They are material, but not materialistic. They believe wholeheartedly in the intervention and providence of God. It is always "*In sha Allah*" — if it is God's will. They make no plan, undertake nothing without adding "*In sha Allah*".

A Greek merchant says to a fellah, "You'll bring me your cotton, then, tomorrow ?"

"Yes, *ya khawâga*, (") *in sha Allah*."

"Five cantars, not less. You understand ?"

"Yes, *in sha Allah*."

"You'll be able to find the camels for them ?"

"*In sha Allah*."

"I must have the goods before midday."

183
771 "*In sha Allah*".
812 "In sha Allah's no good. We're talking business, and
437 I want a definite promise".

"No *in sha Allah*, no cotton, *ya khawâga*. Good day".

771 'God will provide. God distributes His benefits. God
776 protects the crops. God is with the patient. To everyone
181 the fate which God has assigned him. We are from God, and to God we shall return. God is there. God will give in His own good time. Man proposes and God disposes. God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.' Such are the sentences of peasant theology. They encourage fatalism and deepen resignation, but they are often rich with all the splendour of filial obedience to the Divine Will.

776 The fellah believes in God as the Prime Mover and First
812 of all Living. In spite of the poverty of his intellect, and his ignorance in matters of religion, his conception of God is admirably pure. God is the Almighty, the Just, the Good. All attributes are united in the word the peasant uses for God, *Rabbina*, our Lord and Master. To hear a fellah utter this word is to be convinced of his faith.

771 The superstitions which enmesh his soul have not cor-
782 rupted the essence of his faith. The fellaheen are far more
785 given to prayer and asceticism than other people, for they are by nature believers. They have always been powerfully attracted by sacredness (*baraka*), the supernatural, holiness, or even the appearance of these things.

779 The Catholics among the fellaheen, whom the writer
793 knows best, can be splendidly religious in their lives, even to
771 the point of heroism. Those of their priests who are fellaheen live among them and for them with a devotion and self-denial of which missionaries from Europe would rarely be capable. It must not be forgotten that the first monks of the Christian world, the monks of the Thebaid, were fellaheen (").

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Egypt MR1

F 184 665 cratic forms can never have been so misleading. But that is not the worst evil, as we shall see.

E 652 439 651 The economic progress of Egypt is as striking as its political development. The country's financial prosperity is remarkable. Even before the war the State had a gold reserve of thirty million pounds, and between 1925 and 1935 it almost doubled. The budget never shows a deficit. The constant increase of revenues from the Customs and the railways, the capital of the limited companies, both foreign and Egyptian, the development of local industry (the Bank Misr companies employ 200,000 men), the place of Egyptian cotton on the world's market, the improved quality of the crops, the systematic extension of perennial irrigation and therefore of agricultural production — all these are signs of prosperity.

F 178 But this progress has resulted in no increased well-being for the fellah. His standard of life and his methods of work have remained unchanged, for all this progress was based on his labour. His ignorance and stagnation were the conditions for this capitalist prosperity.

F [248 249] 'The so-called rich crops', wrote an economist some time ago, 'that is to say cotton and sugar-cane, will not fail to influence the evolution of the fellaheen, since the one develops capital, which will effect an improvement in agriculture, and the other industry, which will sharpen the fellah's wits by the use of machinery.'

F 511 In fact, neither capital nor industry has helped the fellaheen. Both before and after the boom of 1920 their financial affairs were as bad and their poverty as great as a hundred or a thousand years ago. There are even signs, and that in official reports ('[9]), of a lowering of the standard of living. It is the fashion to attribute this to the increase in the population, though 'Aly Shamsy Pasha also cites 'the unequal distribution of agricultural wealth' ('[1]). In the midst of this poverty in prosperity there are still landowners whose incomes are L.E. 12,000 to L.E. 15,000 a year.

F 183 Yet here again the evil must not be exaggerated. There may be something worse than poverty — ignorance.

E 873 The intellectual revival of Egypt has been dazzling. Under the reign of Fuad I especially, learned institutions were multiplied. The Fuad I University, which did not exist twenty-five years ago, has today nearly 10,000 students,

744 to provide public conveniences, in the effort to combat the diseases which lessen the fellah's output ? The Ministry of Public Health, founded in 1934, has given this question priority in its programme, but it has not a large budget, and most of its income goes to pay the salaries of its officials. It has, however, some genuine achievements to its credit. Sixty-seven dispensaries, permanent or travelling, are fighting bilharzia and ankylostomiasis. There are as many hospitals, with about four thousand beds in all, for serious illnesses. In 1936 there were 111 eye-clinics, which had treated 1,133,599 patients. Infant welfare is organised in some forty centres. Doctors, midwives, and visiting nurses, instead of waiting for the peasant woman to come and ask for help, go round from house to house to give treatment and advice. At least half a million visits have been made. By 1937 there were about five thousand certified midwives, who had taken a six months' course in a maternity hospital, and eight thousand of the second class, who had from three to six weeks' training.

744 747 To these splendid efforts must be added the even more devoted labours of private institutions : the dispensaries and home visits of the Franciscan Sisters of Egypt and the many other Catholic sisterhoods, the Protestant foundations, such as the C.M.S. and the American Mission, and the more recent and methodical 'social centres' established in a dozen villages in the Delta.

It is a vast field, and these efforts up to the present have affected only thousands out of millions. Even those fortunate few often lose the benefit of their medical treatment through their ignorance, their unhygienic habits, and their poverty. These are the obstacles to progress.

183 744 A model village has no power to make the fellah a healthy man, immune from sickness. The work of the authorities in the provinces is hardly more succesful. So long as the fellah keeps his present ways of thought and the ignorance that hinders him from knowing what is good for him and what is not, he will remain, in spite of all the improvements [271 356] that are offered him, exactly as he is today. He will refuse filtered water and drink the impure water his fathers drank. Give him a light, airy, healthy dwelling, and he will pervert it to his own manner of life. He will still be unable to 183 profit from the laws and institutions provided to help him.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13

The first and most urgent need, let it be said again, is education. /183

"It is my opinion that every reform which is not founded on the education of the people is destined to fail, or at least to take a very long time—and the people's time is precious. /185 /203

"Nothing will ever come of building model villages, or of using the cinema and the wireless to give advice on health and social matters, unless the people are educated and enabled to make use of all these things." (Article in Al-Mussawar No. 800 by 'Abdel-Qader Hamza Pasha, Senator, 1940.)

Many influential people, however, sincerely believe that to educate the fellah would be to make him unhappy, and that his present state of insensibility and habituation is best for him. He does not suffer so much as one might think, for he does not know what he lacks. To teach him would mean to waken in him demands for comfort and amusement which he could not satisfy, and which would give him a distaste for work on the land. Then what would become of Egypt ? In 1933 a Member of Parliament maintained that the education of the masses was undesirable, and suicidal for Egypt. Many large landowners think the same. /183 /185 /871

This may well be so, if by education is meant the wholly unsuitable programme to be found in the official syllabus of compulsory education. There is no sense in teaching the fellah practices which are useless in the country-side, and are based on purely Western ideas. "This teaching does not give results in proportion to its cost. The Commission therefore advises a radical reorganisation based on a recognition of the need to prepare the young for country life, so as to raise the standard of agricultural production" (''). As for the fellah's distaste for the farm's driving him to the city, this movement comes more from continual poverty than from such teaching. The fellah migrates to the town only because he hopes to earn enough there to enable him to return to the land. /166

It must be said that no depopulation of the countryside has yet been noted. The 1937 census shows a stationary figure for the rural population, in spite of the increased birth rate and the relative decrease of mortality. On the other hand, in the less illiterate villages, and among fellaheen who have returned after a long stay in the city — poorer /162 /166 /184

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
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F 747 to be humane. This is shown by a growing number of articles in the Egyptian Press, as well as by, for instance, a recent film-production entitled *Asifa 'ala-l-Rif* (Storm over the Village), which deals courageously with the problem of the fellah and his masters.

E F 565 747 It is none the less clear that the educated classes have neglected their responsibilities. They have turned away from the masses and devoted themselves to politics, literature, or European travel. They have been self-centred or, as some would say, unpatriotic enough to keep their culture and their wealth strictly to themselves. It is true that every now and again from their ivory tower they have commended enthusiastically the earthy qualities of the fellah, but they have never done much to help him. The occasional meetings of the governing classes with the fellaheen have something theatrical about them, and what is theatrical is obviously not real.

E F 747 184 A member said lately in the Chamber "In this country, when a Prime Minister visits a village, he is accompanied by an escort of some three hundred soldiers, not to mention officers and high officials. Under such conditions he cannot get into touch with the people of the place or find out what they really need" (**). The honourable member went on to suggest that ministers should find out for themselves the true state of the people.

F 183 185 7-8 Thus the fellah, like a neglected child who grows up without thinking or learning anything, has remained rooted to the ground. The earth has stopped him from sinking yet lower ; it has preserved and sustained him, but it could not elevate him. The essential need of the fellaheen is to be awakened and revived to their heritage of humanity.

This is the task of the upper classes, and especially of those who are most concerned with the land : landowners, agricultural engineers, and all who live in the country or visit it in the course of their work, such as merchants, bank-employees, and Government officials. These people should no longer confine themselves to economic administration or political relations with the fellaheen, but should also make an effort to create disinterested human contacts. This is the only way to do any good. It is noticeable how much encouragement the fellaheen derive from the simplest of visits to our village schools by notables or townspeople,

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
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provided these show real cordiality and interest and have come to see the fellaheen for their own sake.

The same task belongs, by virtue of their very function, to teachers and ministers of religion, who enter more deeply into the life of the village. Whoever assists them in their work shows the most intelligent form of patriotism.

The wives and daughters of landowners are also specially called to this task. One young girl of good family who spends her holidays in the country and is sensitive to the people's needs has been able quite alone to gather all the fellaheen of the *'ezba* and, by telling them stories every evening, to educate them and generally raise their standards. This is true feminism at work.

The essential problem, then, is to undertake and carry through a task of education and enlightenment, which is more a matter of personal understanding and personal service than of committees, speeches and official decrees.

The only thing that can awaken without exciting, help without weakening, free without uprooting the fellaheen is a socially-minded and altruistic spirit in the upper classes. It is from above that a beginning must be made.

There could be no fitter conclusion to this book than a quotation from the great Pope Pius XI (21):

"Your duty is to afford the worker both material and spiritual help : material help, by so acting that not only legal justice may work on his behalf, but also social justice; that is to say, that he may benefit from all those institutions that have as their aim the betterment of the conditions of the working classes : spiritual help, by giving them the aid of religion, without which they will live immersed in a brutalising and degrading materialism .... There are millions of human beings living in conditions so pitiful and so wretched that they do not even enjoy the minimum of well-being necessary for the preservation of human dignity."

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